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NEW BUILDING ACT.

We have for some time held aloof from the discussion of this measure, seeing that it was in able hands, and that our readers could have the benefit of a full report of that handling, through the favour of those who did us the honour to recognize our columns as a fitting medium of publication. We have in the first place given the bill itself as first printed, with our own general comments upon it; and since that time the question has been practically considered and scrutinized by several parties, but particularly by the Master Carpenters' Society, as set forth in our Fifteenth Number. We are pleased to be able to give with this week, the report of another influential body, the "Metropolitan Improvement Society." This society was formed about a year or so back, for the purpose of promoting the objects implied under its title, and comprises the names of many noblemen and gentlemen, and several professors, distinguished for an active and successful pursuit and patronage of those branches of art and science involved in the matter of which they take cognizance. A society like this would therefore be expected to apply itself diligently to the question of the Building Act, and accordingly we find that an "Executive Committee" has been formed, and to it we are indebted for a report, which, as it is pointed and brief, we give entire.

At the same time we take occasion to remark, that we think some of the commentators on the Bill are disposed to be somewhat over critical. A bill that meets every case in this complicated crisis of the Building Art, is not even to be hoped for; and many of the provisions that are sought to be ingrafted on the proposed enactment would operate, we fear, to impede its working, or to render that working inefficient. If the views and objections of every party are to be met, there would be no end to the voluminousness of the draft; and to postpone the measure until a grand inquest can be held to determine upon a principle of general and uniform application, would be to wait till something much nearer doomsday. The truth is we are entered on a new era in building art, and it will take many years and great efforts, private and public, to fit ourselves to it; but meantime we must have regulations. There are minds pregnant with inventions applicable to building, that will effect as great a revolution in that, as we have experienced in the engineering and machinery sections. Whatever Crompton, Arkwright, or Watt accomplished in their way, is destined to be equalled, if not exceeded, by the workings of men now on foot or forthcoming; and all nature, some would say all art, is in correspondence with them. During the architectural sleep of the last three centuries, a new world has been forming, concoctions and deposits have accumulated; towards which man, like the little coral insect, has been industriously contributing all unconsciously. And we are just on the eve of emerging from the barbaric efforts of a people whose dependence has been on this or that foreign or distant aid in all our efforts at design and structure. But we cannot stand for this, the wants of the day are pressing, and we had almost said this bungling, or apparent bungling, in legislation is necessary to bring us on the morrow. Inconsistency we have, and shall have abundance of, and our wisest efforts abound in it; the great advantage of a move is to give some keen, sharp-sighted looker-on a view of some new play, or to awaken his mind to the sense of a previous blunder, but we cannot stand still. Like the Israelites in the desert, we are journeying to a settled country, and leaving that of bondage and darkness. Our legislation is one of shifts and expedients, and it cannot help being so. As to settling down at once upon the working of some great principle, it is absurd to expect it; the period of gestation and labour must be gone through; however, we do not for all this say, take the proposed Building Act as it is—we cannot be so far misunderstood—but we do say this, do not attempt too much.

In the objections to the cumbrous machinery of fees, to the great staff of surveyors, &c., we coincide; the grand thing, however, for which we contend, is a properly-constituted Board of Reference, and to vest in them sufficient discretionary power, minimize the fees of reference, so as not to offer a premium for vexatious and frivolous appeals; and let this court or board be a stipendiary one, let the nomination be with the profession—the confirmation alone with the Government.

THE UNITED SOCIETIES OF CARPENTERS' ANNUAL DINNER.

This festival, for so we feel inclined to call it, took place at Highbury-barn on Whit-Monday. This is the eighth anniversary; and although the numbers attending were not so numerous as on former occasions, owing probably to the depression of the times, the respectable character of the company, and the excellent arrangements of the stewards, were such as to compensate in some degree for the falling off we have alluded to. Perhaps many would not regard it as a small affair, after all, with 260 guests at the dining-table, and 300 persons joining in the subsequent dance. It was a gratifying sight to witness the mixed assemblage of the wives and children of the workmen enjoying with their protectors the pleasures which their foresight and care had provided, for after dinner the whole party paraded the grounds of the tavern, and then joined in the in-door arrangements, which consisted of speech and song intermixed, and the enlivening airs of a band of music, until 9 o'clock, when the dance commenced.

The chair was ably filled by Mr. Brailey, and the principal speakers were Messrs. Taprell, Blewitt, Prior, and Butler, whose plain, common-sense oratory found its way to the feeling and apprehension of their hearers.

What was most edifying and consolatory to witness was the orderly deportment of all even to the conclusion. Their sober and temperate demeanour marked them out for an example to the class, not only of their fellow-workmen, but to the superior citizen; and we could not help feeling a species of regret lingering within our breast, that the time seems not yet to be come, when the masters of such independent, and therefore trustful and faithful men, can extend the little reward of mixing with, or presiding over these or other feasts, in which the kind and generous feelings are so successfully cultivated.

Let us hope, however, that the day is not far distant when the concessions of the workmen to the convictions of their reason and the principles of justice will be regarded as entitling them to that same meed of consideration which all who generously conquer themselves have awarded to them. We know what has been done by them in voluntarily abolishing what were thought to be vexatious restrictions of the workshop, impeding and inconveniencing their masters in some instances very seriously. They have also laid aside the regulations and abolished the constitution of their "Trades' Unions"—the oath of enrolment and the secret conclave are matters of history, in which they did but imitate their "betters"(?) Even Manchester has come to the resolution of recommending the dissolution of the old trades' unions. Now, we believe there are about 5,000 members of the United Societies of Carpenters, all, or most of them, enrolled either as benefit clubs or building societies—allowing, many of them, 12s. per week to their unemployed brethren in the winter season, and in some cases finding employment for them in making articles of joinery, which are either sold or laid up in reserve for the houses to be built by the particular society.

But we must bring our observations to a close for the present; and it may not be out of place to add that the Society of Smiths and Farriers held their annual dinner and meeting at the same place and time as the United Carpenters, and conducted themselves with equal propriety and good sense.

THE ANALOGIES OF ARCHITECTURE AND POETRY.

The elegant arts have all their origin in that deepest and most mysterious of fountains—the human heart. Like streams descending from the same perennial spring, they sometimes wander over the plain in widely divergent channels; but, for the most part, they hold on their way in parallel courses, and, by a thousand lateral branches, are perpetually intermingling their waters. Some of these streams may, in certain cases, be dried up, while the rest continue to flow on with undiminished activity; but, generally speaking, a change in the force or volume of any one of them will correspondingly affect the residue, and the tide of all will ebb or flow together. The vicissitudes of some one of the fine arts may thus be indicative of the condition of the rest, and may serve to connect that condition with causes to which it is not obviously referable. Analogies, it is true, are not proofs; but they will often suggest proofs to the imagination, or at least a method of obtaining them: and we think a true conception of architectural or any other art must be materially aided by the numerous and diverse lights which a wide range of analogies must necessarily throw upon it. The analogies subsisting between architecture and poetry are neither so numerous nor so strong as those which are to be found in some other departments of art; nevertheless, they appear to be susceptible of a development calculated to clear up much that is mysterious in architecture, and productive of much curious and useful information. Such a development, however, would be an undertaking incompatible with the limits to which we are at present restricted, to say nothing of obstacles of a still weightier kind: and we must content ourselves with a few scattered and hasty hints, which constitute the whole we are now able to offer.

It is, we believe, very well ascertained that metrical preceded prose composition: and the cause of this remarkable circumstance has been, with great plausibility, supposed to be a desire to distinguish the fruit of thought and reflection from the frivolities of ordinary conversation. Before the invention of writing, the only expedient by which it seems possible careful composition could be distinguished from vulgar discourse, consisted in the adoption of some peculiarity significant of art and premeditation, and which, by the difficulties it presented, might certify the skill of the person by whom those difficulties had been surmounted. It would appear, therefore, to be a natural event in the progress of society, that poetry should precede prose; and, by a reference to history, we find that in the early ages of the world even the laws were reduced to verse. Homer and Hesiod long preceded

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